

Canada's arctic on front lines of climate change

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Body

The world seems to have finally awoken to the global climate emergency Inuit have been warning about for more than three decades.

As early as 2005, the Inuit Circumpolar Council sued the U.S. government, the world's largest climate polluter, on the grounds of human rights violations under the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man.

It is therefore encouraging, nearly 15 years later, to see so many young people leading global climate strikes and demanding aggressive climate action from their leaders. Inuit stand in solidarity with them.

The global climate emergency is the defining issue of our time and the choices nation states make now will determine whether or not planet Earth continues to be habitable for the human species.

Earlier this month, millions of people of all ages from around the world took part in the largest climate action in history. Last Monday's United Nations Climate Action Summit made modest gains in securing more ambitious commitments from some governments and private sector leaders for accelerated climate action to meet looming deadlines and avert unforgiving thresholds.

Thousands more participated in climate strikes across Canada this past Friday in solidarity with a growing youth-led movement to demand global climate action centred on human rights, equity and justice - principles that are central to the National Inuit Climate Change Strategy released by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami this year.

The strategy calls for transformative action to address climate risks and inequities, grounded in Inuit science and rights. It outlines co-ordinated action with governments and organizations in five areas (knowledge and capacity building; health, well-being and the environment; food systems; infrastructure; and energy).

From the land to the oceans to the ice, our Arctic homeland is experiencing the impacts of climate change at a scale and speed greater than any other region and with an intensity increasingly exceeding already troubling scientific predictions.

Some models suggest that Inuit Nunangat may experience an ice free summer as early as 2036 if aggressive action isn't taken to curb greenhouse gas emissions. The climate impacts our people are experiencing are likely to intensify as melting summer sea ice further opens our homelands to shipping, tourism, and extractive industries, potentially magnifying existing challenges caused by climate change.

The profound infrastructure gaps between Inuit Nunangat and most other regions of Canada are further magnified by the negative impacts of our rapidly warming planet. Coastal erosion threatens the very existence of some of our communities, degrading permafrost compromises built infrastructure, such as housing, while our communities

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already face a severe housing shortage. Changing temperatures and precipitation patterns endanger the water supply for our communities.

The pervasive impacts of climate change on our social, cultural, ecological, and economic systems, as well as on Inuit health and well-being, are making long-standing inequities worse.

Inuit stand in solidarity with the climate strikes across Canada - some in our own communities - to hold leaders accountable for achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. We must all rise to the climate challenge to ensure a more sustainable, equitable and just future for all.

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